

**May 13, 2004**

## **Ten years in federal prison for gun possession**

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### **Statutory maximum penalty for Luis Mercado, convicted in November**

A federal judge has sentenced **Luis Mercado**, of Providence, to 120 months in federal prison – the statutory maximum – for being a felon in possession of a firearm. In November, a federal trial jury found Mercado guilty after hearing evidence that he had a handgun on him when Providence Police were investigating a disturbance off Bodell Avenue in February 2003.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the sentence, which U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi imposed today in U.S. District Court, Providence. Mercado, 32, of 4 Bodell Avenue, has several prior felony convictions that include drug trafficking and assault.

During the November trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha presented evidence that, at about 11:45 PM on February 14, Detective Oscar Perez and Patrolman Thomas Zincone were patrolling the Bodell Avenue area in an unmarked police car. They observed a disturbance in a parking lot at 7 Bodell Avenue and went to investigate.

As they approached the scene, Detective Perez saw a man, later identified as Mercado, holding a chrome handgun. The officers drew their weapons and ordered Mercado to drop the gun but he put it in his jacket, started to flee, and discarded the jacket. Detective Perez retrieved the handgun, a loaded, .22 caliber pistol, and both officers tackled Mercado and arrested him.

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## **Project Safe Neighborhoods**

**Providence Police** and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** investigated the case. The U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office coordinated a joint prosecution of the case as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes and gun violence.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Neronha prosecuted the federal case.

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